



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Teton
National Park

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Grand Teton National Park News Release

Long-time Grand Teton National Park Ranger Doug McLaren Passed Away

Doug McLaren passed away Sunday evening, May 2, 2004, at the St. John's Living Center in Jackson, Wyoming after struggling with failing health. McLaren dedicated 40 years of his professional life to the National Park Service – 35 of those years were spent as a Grand Teton National Park ranger. In 1952, McLaren began working as a mountaineering ranger at Grand Teton and retired in 1987 after serving as the park's north district ranger based out of Colter Bay.

After officially retiring from federal service, McLaren took only one weekend off before returning the following Monday morning to begin work as a volunteer at Grand Teton's vehicle maintenance shop in Moose. For the past 16 years, he generously donated his time each day at the auto shop.

McLaren began his National Park Service (NPS) career in 1942 as a seasonal fire guard at Rocky Mountain National Park. He also worked as a winter snowplow operator and a member of the trail crew before joining the army in 1943. McLaren spent two and a half years during World War II with the 10th Mountain Division stationed in Italy and later worked as an instructor of civilian survival for the Strategic Air Command, where he taught climbing and ground survival skills to air crews.

McLaren took his first permanent NPS assignment in 1952 as a climbing ranger at Grand Teton and worked in several ranger positions until his final post as north district ranger. For 15 years, McLaren was in charge of rescue operations for the Jenny Lake Subdistrict at Grand Teton. He established a mountaineering register system and co-authored "Mountain Search and Rescue Operations," a guide for search and rescue techniques that was implemented servicewide in many national parks. Over the years, he was involved in hundreds of mountain rescues, including the largest rescue mission in the annals of American mountaineering. This historic three-day rescue occurred in July 1962 and involved ten climbers from the Appalachian Mountain Club who were caught in a vigorous winter-like storm on the Grand Teton.

McLaren's expertise, training and experience in the field of mountain search and rescue earned him numerous NPS special achievement awards. He received six departmental Unit Awards for Excellence of Service and both the Department of the Interior Meritorious Service Award and Superior Service Award.


In 1953, McLaren began working as a National Ski Patrol volunteer at Snow King Mountain. He became an integral member of the volunteer team, donating his time and expertise toward avalanche control and rescue operations on the ski slopes. In 1987, he was voted the National Ski Patroller of the Year for the United States, which includes approximately 20,000 patrollers.

McLaren came from a family tradition of service in the national parks. His father, Fred Douglas McLaren, Sr., served for 37 years as a ranger in Rocky Mountain National Park. Both of his brothers also enjoyed lengthy careers with the NPS; Richard (Dick) over 30 years at Olympic, Yosemite and Grand Canyon, and Elbert (Bert) over 30 years at Yellowstone and Rocky Mountain. Collectively, the McLarens have contributed approximately 150 years of time and dedication to the National Park Service.

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Memorial donations in Doug McLaren's name may be sent to the Snow King Volunteer Ski Patrol at P.O. Box 1114, Jackson, Wyoming 83001, or donations may be made to the Senior Center of Jackson Hole at P.O. Box 4677, Jackson, Wyoming 83001. Cards and condolences may be mailed to Doug's daughter Sharon Wiley at P.O. Box 422, Wilson, Wyoming 83014.

Grand Teton National Park 75th Anniversary ~ 1929-2004
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